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PERSONALITY TRAITS OF THE GIFTED UNDERACHIEVER
WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE
IN THE MIDDLE AND UPPER GRADES OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
(TITLE)

BY

Betty Stoltz

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS PLAN B PAPER BE ACCEPTED AS
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I

INTRODUCTION

Scope of the Problem--The Cause for Concern

One of the greatest social wastes in our culture is that presented by the gifted child who cannot or will not work up to his ability. Often parents and school personnel shrug their shoulders and say, "Oh, he'll grow out of it," but more often than not, he doesn't.

Abraham dramatically expresses thoughts about this waste:

If we set fire tomorrow to all the coal and oil still underground, you would see headlines a foot high. If within the next week we blotted out all our automobile plants by a restrictive type of atomic bomb, you would be speechless with horror. If we deliberately tore up our vast expanses of beautiful cross-country roads, your shock would be limitless. Difficult as it is to believe, we are being even more destructive in hard-headedly ignoring our greatest natural resource of all. Waste of a material nature we can see rather easily, and be horrified by it, but waste of people leaves many of us on the "ho-hum" sidelines.¹

With the advent of Sputnik, many Americans awoke to the fact that such a glaring waste of talent had become a national embarrassment, causing our country to "lose face" in the eyes of its citizens as well as with the rest of the

¹Willard Abraham, Common Sense About Gifted Children (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 3.

world. Sensing that this could become disastrous, "stepped-up" programs were hurriedly set up in the schools in the areas of science and mathematics, and the academically talented students were more than encouraged to enter into these areas of study.

Although the emergency of the national situation can well be appreciated, it seems that the concern of many Americans for the gifted student stops at that point. Little do they consider that perhaps in an obscure classroom, there sits a potential "Jonas Salk" of the cancer virus, who will never go to college because he is disinterested and unchallenged in his school work. Perhaps future "Albert Schweitzer's", who are sorely needed as examples of the "good American" in distressed countries, as well as for their contribution to mankind, are wasting their talents, as they are encouraged by their parents to seek status and material wealth instead of using their talents for the betterment of man and his society.

Since, in our culture, education is considered to be the main avenue in the preparation for living and serving in our society, it is important that more gifted students be channeled into higher education. Yet, of the high school students who rank in the top third in intellectual ability, 40 percent do not go on to college. Of those who do enter, 60 percent do not finish.²

²Irene H. Impellizzeri, "Nature and Scope of the Problem," in Guidance for the Underachiever with Superior Ability (U. S. Office of Education, 1961, Bulletin No. 25), p. 2.

Stated differently, this means that only 24 percent of this group become college graduates, and the talents of 76 percent are untrained.

It is recognized that many of those within the top third in intellectual ability in a given high school class would probably not be classified as "gifted". However a look at the educational records of definitely gifted persons will show the waste is there also--not as great with regard to percentages, but more so in terms of potential contributions.

Terman, in his follow-up study of gifted children with intelligence quotients of 140 or higher found that approximately 90 percent of the gifted men and 86 percent of the gifted women entered college. Of these, 70 percent of the men and 67 percent of the women graduated.³

Although these percentages were eight times as great as for the state of California at that time, Terman wrote:

The fact remains that practically all of the gifted subjects were potentially superior college material, and that probably a third left school with less--often, much less--training than they should have had.⁴

Dr. Arthur Looby has examined these figures in a different light, which perhaps more clearly shows the waste involved in this gifted group:

³Lewis M. Terman and Melita H. Oden, Genetic Studies of Genius, Volume IV, The Gifted Child Grows Up: Twenty-five Year's Follow-up of a Superior Group (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1947), p. 167.

⁴Ibid., p. 148.

Of the 799 gifted men, 90% entered college and 70% of them graduated. . . .that means that 719 men entered college and 503 graduated. Someplace along the line 216 young men with Binet I. Q.'s 140 and above were lost. Add to that the 80 who did not go to college. Over 1/3 of the group.

. . .there were 624 women. Of this number, 86% entered and 67% graduated. In figures again that means 537 women entered college and 360 graduated. This time, a loss of almost 50%. . .⁵

Concerning the grades of those gifted who graduated from college, Dr. Looby points out that 22.5 percent of the men and 17.5 percent of the women had less than a "B" average. Taken as a group, this means that about 20 percent of these gifted persons did not live up to their abilities.⁶

Much of the current research being carried on concerning the gifted centers in the high schools. Gowan writes that figures have been presented to show that

. . .in one California high school where 7 percent of the students were gifted, 42 percent of these were underachievers. In another high school where 2 percent of the students were gifted, 16 percent of these were underachievers. In an outstanding independent secondary school, 12 percent of the students were gifted and 9 percent of these were underachievers. . .⁷

As these gifted students "drop out" of further education, the loss is not only that of society, but also that of the individual, since his opportunities for living

⁵Arthur J. Looby, "Educational Guidance and Motivation of Gifted Children," (Mimeographed), p. 1.

⁶Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁷John C. Gowan, "Dynamics of the Underachievement of Gifted Students," Exceptional Children, XXIV (November, 1957), p. 98.

a satisfying and "fulfilled" life are decreased in that many rewarding careers are closed to him, and he may be forced into an occupation which offers little challenge for his superior mental abilities.

One such example is cited by a leading writer in the field of gifted children:

At eight years of age, Bill's I. Q. was 182. Teachers predicted a brilliant career in science. Two years later the record read: "Exceptional ability; brightest boy in his class; strong interests in science." Today, without college training, he heads the credit department of a store. Such waste of human resources might be prevented if teachers and parents learned to recognize early and to guide the gifted child. . . .⁸

Contributing Causal Factors

There are many possible reasons for the discrepancy between superior intellectual ability and low academic aspiration or success. Very briefly, three major contributing factors will be discussed.

Society, itself, is partly to blame as this writer implies:

There is little incentive to youth of high ability who finds mediocrity handsomely rewarded in so many walks of life. A culture that adores financial status, physical beauty, second-rate professional entertainment, and the accumulation of material things creates an alien world for the brilliant student. The student must frequently choose between what can be quickly obtained and what can only be obtained by long submission to educational routine.

⁸Ruth Strang, "Psychology of Gifted Children and Youth," in Psychology of Exceptional Children and Youth, William M. Cruickshank, editor. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 514.

and when what is so difficult to obtain is so little applauded, the choice may be a cruel one to make.⁹

The home is to blame, also. In the early years, lack of love may make the gifted child apathetic and unable to use the exploring and organizing qualities of his mind. Harsh treatment, neglect, or rejection by the parents causes extreme anxiety which blocks learning. Lack of things to explore and handle and lack of people to talk with will prevent him from acquiring the verbal ability and other necessary learnings on which he can build.¹⁰

Many underachievers come from broken homes or homes in which there is considerable strife. Often the parents either do not discipline him effectively or disagree over discipline.¹¹ These parents tend to exhibit a neutral or uninterested attitude towards education. They are likely to be overanxious, oversolicitous, or inconsistent in their attitudes toward the child. The lack of a cooperative spirit in the family is evidenced by conflict, authoritarianism by the parent or domination by the child.¹²

⁹Impellizzeri, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁰Ruth Strang, "The Nature of Giftedness," Education for the Gifted, The Fifty-seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Nelson B. Henry, editor. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 74.

¹¹Norma E. Cutts and Nicholas Moseley, Teaching the Bright and Gifted (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 132.

¹²Harry O. Barrett, "An Intensive Study of Thirty-Two Gifted Children," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXVI (November, 1957), p. 194.

Home situations often inhibit the identification of the child with the parent. A gifted boy, especially, may find it difficult to identify with his father, since he does not see him in the proper perspective. He likely will see him resting in the evening while his mother prepares the meal or does other household chores. And, if the father dislikes his job, this offers little incentive for adult life.¹³

And the school is to blame. Often the child of superior ability becomes bored through lack of challenging learning situations; he may rebel at having to spend time on what he considers "busy work". He may develop poor study habits or none at all.¹⁴ Often, in order to be more accepted by his peers, he will do poor or average classroom work.¹⁵ He may value speed in finishing assignments rather than the quality of work done. Many times he is regarded as being "show-offish" or antagonistic by a teacher who misunderstands him or feels threatened by the child's superior ability.

Easy as it is to affix the blame on these three institutions, it is necessary to realize that while the values of a society and attitudes of parents and teachers

¹³Jane W. Kessler, "My Son, the Underachiever," Parent-Teacher's Association Magazine, LVII (June, 1963), p. 14.

¹⁴Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 133.

¹⁵Charles H. Josephson, "Do Grades Stimulate Students to Failure?" Chicago Schools Journal, XLIII (December, 1961), p. 127.

cannot be changed "overnight", it is important that something be done towards helping gifted students realize their potential abilities.

Problem of Study

The problem with which this paper deals is the identification and examination of various personality traits of underachieving gifted students, as found by current research studies; to compare them with the personality traits of those gifted students who do achieve on a level commensurate with their abilities; and to attribute a partial cause of these differences to the development of faulty and healthy self-concepts, respectively.

The possibilities of the use of guidance techniques in helping gifted underachievers to improve their self-concepts with the subsequent improvement of academic success will then be explored.

Definition of Terms

Gifted: The term gifted, as it is used here, refers to those students who have, in a broad sense, superior mental abilities, with primary emphasis being placed on superior intellectual abilities; the abilities to deal with facts, ideas, and relationships.

There have been many thoughts about what constitutes giftedness. Writers in the field today still do not agree as to what it involves. Sir Francis Galton, in his book

Hereditary Genius, in 1869, recognized two kinds of ability--a "general" ability and a number of special aptitudes. He wrote that those who achieved outstanding success differ from ordinary people in degree rather than in kind; in the quantity of their general ability rather than in the quality of their particular talents or aptitudes. For example, he stated that "Without a special gift for mathematics a man cannot be a mathematician; but without a high degree of general ability he will never make a great mathematician."¹⁶

Both Hollingworth and Terman accepted Galton's theories in their studies of the gifted; that the "primary factor determining the potential achievement of each individual was his innate allowance of 'general ability'." Thus, they based their definitions of the gifted child on the I. Q. as measured by tests of intelligence.¹⁷

In more recent years, a broader and more generous type of description is often used. Ruth Strang has written:

In recent years the definition of the gifted has been broadened to include not only the verbally gifted with I. Q.'s of above 130. We not tend to think of the gifted as individuals whose performance in any line

¹⁶Cyril Burt, "General Introduction: The Gifted Child," in The Gifted Child, The Year Book of Education, 1962, George Z. F. Bereday and Joseph A. Lauwreys, joint editors. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc, 1952), p. 3.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 5.

of socially useful endeavor is consistently superior.¹⁸

DeHaan and Havighurst have defined the gifted as any child "who is superior in some ability that can make him an outstanding contributor to the welfare of, and quality of living in, society."¹⁹

These writers further describe giftedness as having many facets. One of these, the basic ingredient, is intellectual ability, which is composed of several parts, sometimes called "primary mental abilities". They describe it as :

An outstanding manifestation of giftedness is intellectual ability, which is composed of several parts, sometimes called "primary mental abilities". One of these is the ability to use words, to comprehend their meaning, to read and write effectively. A second is the ability to use numbers, to compute rapidly and accurately. A third is spatial ability, the ability to visualize objects in two or three demensions, to "see" objects from different points of view, to keep oneself oriented in space. . . . A fourth primary mental ability is the ability to remember. A fifth is the ability to reason inductively. There are other less clearly defined factors of intellectual ability. Those described above, however, are most clearly related to success in the usual school tasks.²⁰

Intelligence, or intellectual ability is basic to the other talents, which are creative thinking, scientific

¹⁸Ruth Strang, "The Counselor's Contribution to the Guidance of the Gifted, the Underachiever, and the Retarded," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXIV (April, 1956), p. 494.

¹⁹Robert F. DeHaan and Robert J. Havighurst, Educating Gifted Children (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 1.

²⁰Ibid., p. 4.

ability, social leadership, mechanical skills, and talent in the fine arts.²¹

Kirk puts these ideas more succinctly as he defines giftedness as "superior ability to deal with facts, ideas, and relationships."²²

Regardless of our definition of giftedness, most gifted children are identified by means of a standardized intelligence test for research purposes, and the dividing line between gifted and non-gifted is somewhat arbitrary. Various authorities for various purposes have used anywhere from 115 I. Q. to 180 I. Q. as the dividing line.²³ In most of the studies read, the gifted were those having a measured I. Q. of 130 or above.

Underachiever: The term "underachiever" refers to the gifted student whose academic success is significantly below his ability to perform.

It is recognized that all persons tend not to work to their full capacity, therefore, all gifted children are technically underachievers. John Peterson defines an underachiever as "a student who has the ability to achieve a level of academic success significantly above that

²¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²²Samuel A. Kirk, Educating Exceptional Children (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. 39

²³Ibid.

which he actually attains."²⁴

There are several ways in which underachievement has been measured. In most cases, it is a comparison of intellectual ability and school grades. Gowan defines underachievement as

. . .performance which places the student more than a full standard deviation below his ability standing in the same group. Roughly this works out to be about 30 percentiles difference, so that we may call gifted children underachievers when they fall in the middle third in scholastic achievement in grades and severe underachievers when they fall in the lowest third.²⁵

Another way of determining underachievement is by comparing intellectual ability with standardized achievement test scores. In the New York City schools, those students with a measured I. Q. of 130 or above who scored below the 90th percentile on the Iowa tests were classified as underachievers.²⁶

It is recognized that teacher's marks and achievement tests do not measure the same thing. The giving of academic grades involves a student's initiative, responsibility, punctuality, perserverance, neatness, conformance to the

²⁴John Peterson, "Researcher and the Underachiever: Never the Twain Shall Meet," Phi Delta Kappan, XLIV (May, 1963), p. 379.

²⁵Gowan, op. cit.

²⁶Morris Krugman and Irene Impellizzeri, "Identification and Guidance of Underachieving Gifted Students in New York City," Exceptional Children, XXVI (February, 1960), p. 284.

demands of the school, and the attitude of the teacher.²⁷

Standardized achievement tests, on the other hand, make less demands on the student. It requires none of the student's free time as it is given during the school day. It requires no preparation or homework. The student does not receive a "grade" on his performance, and, probably the most important item is that, it is not made up by the teacher and the attitude of the teacher is not involved in its scoring.

Jane Kessler clarifies the term underachievers as she states:

Most so-called underachievers are non-producers rather than non-learners. Such children score well on achievement tests, proving that somehow or other they have been learning what they should. However they get poor grades or poor reports from their teachers, and these may indicate one or more of a number of things: unwillingness or inability to produce written work; inability or unwillingness to cooperate with the teacher; poor attention in class; and so on.²⁸

Personality Traits: The term "personality traits", as used here refers to those characteristics of an individual, shown either in behavior or attitudes, which are related to academic achievement.

In a review of several prominent studies, R. G. Taylor identified seven areas of personality traits in which gifted achievers and gifted underachievers differed

²⁷James V. Pierce, "The Bright Achiever and Under-achiever: A Comparison," in The Yearbook of Education, 1962, op. cit., p. 144.

²⁸Kessler, op. cit.

significantly. These seven areas are academic anxiety, self-value, authority relations, interpersonal relations, independent-dependent conflict, activity pattern, and goal orientation.²⁹

Guidance: Guidance, as used here, refers to a form of systematic assistance in a counseling relationship with regard to habits, attitudes, and intimate personal problems.³⁰ The personal problems dealt with are those of a relatively mild nature, since the guidance counselor is not qualified to deal with the more severe psychological problems.

The counseling process will take one of three forms-- directive, non-directive, or eclectic (a combination of the two). The directive approach is one in which the counselor or teacher takes a direct part in the solution of the student's problem by suggesting alternative decisions and plans of action and by offering possible interpretations of the student's aptitudes, interests, and personality as indicated by tests and historical data.³¹

The non-directive approach is one that is based on the assumption that the individual has the capacity to solve his own problems. The counselor's role, then is one of clarifying the feelings which he encourages the

²⁹Ronald G. Taylor, "Personality Traits and Discrepant Achievement: A Review," Journal of Counseling Psychology, LXXVII (Spring, 1964), p. 77

³⁰Dictionary of Education, Second Edition, Carter V. Good, editor. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959), p. 258.

³¹Ibid., p. 138.

student to express freely, so as to allow the individual to see his problem more clearly and thus, to work out his own solution.³² This type of counseling may be done by the counselor in his office or by the teacher during an informal situation such as might be had during a recess or after school. Again, the problems dealt with are of a mild psychological nature.

Individual counseling refers to a direct personal help given to one individual in solving a problem by gathering all the facts together and focusing all the individual's experiences on the problem.³³

Group counseling refers to counseling simultaneously with two or more persons who have at least one problem in common.³⁴ In this case the common problem is that of low performance in spite of superior mental ability.

Methods Used to Assess Personality Traits

Many methods have been devised with which to assess personality traits. These are usually inventories which take the forms of self-rating, peer-rating, and teacher-rating scales. Psychological interviews are a valuable means of assessing traits, also.

Most of the inventories used are self-rating.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

Perhaps one of the most widely used is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. This includes ten scales of personality factors, these being the psychopathic, paranoia, psychoasthenia, schizophrenia, hypomania, social introversion, hypochondria, depression, hysteria, and interest scales.

The California Psychological Inventory is also a self-rating of the adjustment of an individual. It includes the following scales: dominance, capacity for status, sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, sense of well-being, responsibility, socialization, self-control, tolerance, good impression, communality, achievement via conformance, achievement via independence, intellectual efficiency, psychological mindedness, flexibility, and femininity.³⁵

The Bell Index of Adjustment and Values measures self-concept, self-acceptance, and the ideal self of the individual, and his perception of the self-concept, self-acceptance and the ideal self of his peers.³⁶

Another way of assessing personality traits is through peer ratings. A typical test, "Who Are They?" is a sociometric, peer rating instrument in which students are nominated for leadership behavior, aggressive behavior,

³⁵Pierce, op. cit., p. 147.

³⁶Merville C. Shaw and G. J. Alves, "Self-Concept of Bright Underachievers," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLII (December, 1963), p. 401.

and withdrawn types of behavior.³⁷

A rating scale by teachers, the Behavior Description Chart measures the same types of behavior as the "Who Are They?".³⁸

Interviews are important in assessing personality traits. In one study, interviews concerned the following areas: grades desired, educational and occupational goals, reading habits, school subjects liked, identification with adults who valued education, and peers important to the individual. Projective methods have been used also. One such test which measures motivation, is McClelland's Thematic Apperception Test.³⁹

³⁷Pierce, op. cit., p. 146.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

II

PERSONALITY TRAITS OF THE GIFTED UNDERACHIEVER

Psychological Health and Underachievement

Terman and Oden,⁴⁰ as a phase of the follow-up study on gifted children, compared a group of 150 of the most successful with 150 of the least successful of the men who were 25 years old or older in 1940. "Success" was the extent to which the person had made use of his superior intellectual ability. The most successful group was termed "A's" and the least successful, "C's".

The educational achievements of the whole group have been referred to previously, but this study gives added dimensions to those figures. Ninety percent of the A's graduated from college while only 37 percent of the C's did so. Seventy-six percent of the A's and only 15 percent of the C's completed one or more years of graduate work. Of those who graduated, more than half of the A's but only 4 percent of the C's were elected to Phi Beta Kappa or Sigma Xi.

In occupational comparison, 70 percent of the A's were in the professions while 9 percent of the C's were.

⁴⁰Terman and Oden, op. cit., pp. 311-352.

In comparing childhood data, a number of significant differences were found between the groups on emotional security, social adjustments, and various personality traits. The same was found to be true in the 1922 ratings. "That is, 18 years prior to the classification of these subjects on the basis of adult achievement, teachers and parents had been able to discern personality differences that would later characterize the two groups." The trait ratings of 1928 gave even larger differences between the groups.

In trait ratings by the men themselves, their wives, parents, and the field workers, the A's were rated far higher than the C's in perseverance, self-confidence, and integration towards goals. The A's were also rated higher than the C's with respect to absence of inferiority feelings, though the difference was not large.

On another set of traits, the field workers rated the A's much higher than the C's in appearance, attractiveness, alertness, poise, attentiveness, curiosity, originality, and to a lesser degree, speech and friendliness.

Terman sums up these and other findings in this statement:

Everything considered, there is nothing in which the A and C groups present a greater contrast than in drive to achieve and in all-round social adjustment. Contrary to the theory . . . that great achievement is usually associated with emotional tensions which border on the abnormal, in our gifted group success is associated with stability rather than instability, with absence rather than presence of disturbing conflicts--in short, with well-balanced temperament and with freedom from excessive frustration. . . .

At any rate, we have seen that intellect and achievement are far from perfectly correlated. Why this is so, what circumstances affect the fruition of human talent, are questions of such transcendent importance that they should be investigated by every method that promises the slightest reduction of our present ignorance. So little do we know about our available supply of potential genius, the environmental factors that favor or hinder its expression, the emotional compulsions that give it dynamic quality, or the personality distortions that make it dangerous.⁴¹

In summary of Terman's monumental study, one writer states: "He found a consistently positive correlation between success and such variables as mental health, emotional stability, and social adjustment. He established that there is a close association of psychological health with well-manifested and well-functioning cognitive powers."⁴²

Within the New York City Talent Preservation Project, a special inquiry was made into the psychological health of 315 gifted adolescents. Of these 255 were low achievers and 60 were high achievers. Results indicated that emotional turbulence may underlie many learning disorders. Interviews by a psychiatrist yielded no single factor to account for poor achievement, but the problems seemed to fall into four groups:

1. For approximately 30 percent, the learning disorder was associated with poor motivation.
2. For 10 percent, the learning disorder was associated with acute reactions to situations such as illness and problems with teachers.
3. For 50 percent, evidence was shown of relatively

⁴¹Ibid., p. 352.

⁴²Impellizzeri, op. cit., p. 4.

serious chronic neurotic problems which were associated with the learning disorder.

4. For 10 percent, there was shown an urgent need for immediate treatment, without which serious danger to the health and welfare of the student was present. This category included students with problems of depression and delinquent behavior.⁴³

All four groups show some degree of personality problems. This writer gives a lead into the subject:

One of the most promising areas of research dealing with gifted children has been that which concentrates on the gifted underachiever. Although many factors may be associated with underachievement, mounting evidence indicates that certain personality characteristics may differentiate these students from equally gifted pupils who realize their academic promise.⁴⁴

There have been many studies conducted to ascertain in what ways personality traits of the gifted underachiever correspond to those of the gifted achiever. Researchers have made use of interviews, personality inventories and check-lists, projective techniques, and opinions of teachers and the peer group. In a review of several prominent studies, R. G. Taylor identified seven areas of personality traits in which the gifted achievers and underachievers differed significantly. These seven areas are academic anxiety, self-value, authority relations, interpersonal relations, independence-dependence conflict, activity patterns, and goal orientation.⁴⁵

⁴³Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴W. K. Durr and R. R. Schmatz, "Personality Differences Between High-achieving and Low-achieving Gifted Children," Reading Teacher, XVII (January, 1964), p. 251.

⁴⁵Taylor, op. cit.

Academic Anxiety

In the area of academic anxiety, it has been found that while both the gifted achievers and gifted under-achievers tend to have anxiety, that of the gifted achiever is directed towards his work, while the gifted under-achiever has a "free-floating" anxiety, which casts personal and academic activity into disorder. He has a high conflict over conduct and sex, a high degree of emotionality, and exhibits instability and maladjustment. He tends to have a general self-depreciation and free-floating anxiety relating to non-achievement areas, also. Normal shortcomings tend to be denied as he attempts to maintain a superior self-image. He has difficulty paying attention in class and studying.⁴⁶

Underachievers lack power of concentration. Many of them find it next to impossible to settle down to work. When they are supposed to be studying they sit and watch TV, listen to records, or daydream. They do not know how to distribute their time. They spend every available minute on a subject they like and leave their other books unopened.⁴⁷

In a study of gifted underachieving elementary boys, the researcher concluded that the gifted underachiever feels restricted, hemmed in, and helpless. He often expresses exaggerated free-floating emotions or represses all emotion when some emotional response seems appropriate.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 133.

⁴⁸Taylor, op. cit.

Self-Value

In the area of self-value, there is general agreement that gifted underachievers are generally more negative in their attitudes toward themselves than are gifted achievers.⁴⁹

A number of investigators have discovered that the gifted underachiever is self-derogatory and depressed in attitudes towards self. He has feelings of inadequacy, a concern about health, and a poor overall adjustment. Often his strong inferiority feelings and passivity result in deliberate failure. Because he lacks confidence in himself, he tends to withdraw, attempting to be self-sufficient.⁵⁰

Surprisingly, the foregoing conclusions seem to apply to males only (who outnumber females by a ratio of 2:1).⁵¹ It has been found by several investigations that gifted underachieving girls do not differ in their self-concept from gifted achieving girls.⁵²

⁴⁹Merville C. Shaw, "Definition and Identification of Academic Underachievement," in Guidance for the Under-achiever with Superior Ability (U. S. Office of Education, 1961, Bulletin No. 25), p. 23.

⁵⁰Taylor, op. cit., p. 78.

⁵¹Robert L. Curry, "Certain Characteristics of Underachievers and Overachievers," Peabody Journal of Education, XXXIX (July, 1961), p. 41.

⁵²Shaw and Alves, op. cit., p. 402.

Merville C. Shaw, Kenneth Edson, and Hugh M. Bell, "The Self-Concept of Bright Underachieving High School Students as Revealed by an Objective Check List," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXIX (November, 1960), p. 196.

Authority Relations

In the area of authority relations, studies show that the gifted achievers have acceptance of authority, while gifted underachievers have hostility towards authority. Shaw writes:

This hostility is generally shown in attitudes towards other people which display a general feeling of distrust and lack of faith in others on the part of the underachiever. These attitudes are most often reflected by feelings which embody the idea that it is necessary to look out for yourself first and that the rights of others are not to be considered when your own welfare is at stake.⁵³

The gifted underachiever's hostility and aggression toward authority has been recognized by many investigators to be directly influenced by his relationship with his parents. The parents do not express their love for the child and are somewhat indifferent or disinterested in the child's academic success. In general, there seems to be a great deal of conflict between one or both of the parents and the child.⁵⁴ Often he feels that his parents have not given him the material things in life he would like to have.⁵⁵

Research reveals that the gifted underachieving male does not have much opportunity of directly expressing

⁵³Shaw, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

⁵⁴Taylor, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

⁵⁵Merville C. Shaw and Donald J. Brown, "Scholastic Underachievement of Bright College Students," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXVI (November, 1957), p. 199.

his aggressive and hostile feelings as he grows older, for in most cases the father was felt to be very distant, strict, and dominating. Often he chooses his school subjects because of parental pressures rather than because of genuine interest.

This conflict and hostility seem to be carried over to authority figures outside the home. Usually the gifted underachieving student dislikes his instructors and is resistant to such tasks as homework. This dislike and hostility is a pronounced characteristic which tends to create a less favorable impression, making him less acceptable to the instructor.⁵⁶

An intensive study by Walsh of high and low achieving gifted boys in the elementary school found that the low achievers saw themselves as less free to make choices and less free to communicate with their parents than those who were high achievers. The high achievers more frequently had a feeling of belongingness in relation to their parents.⁵⁷

As this writer points out, hostility towards authority may be well-cloaked:

Underachievers respond to a number of items (of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) in a direction suggesting that they harbor a good deal of aggression. These range from straight-forward acknowledgment of hostile

⁵⁶Taylor, op. cit.

⁵⁷Durr and Schmatz, op. cit.

impulses to more indirect expressions of aggression.⁵⁸

In the investigation of elementary school boys it was indicated that the gifted underachiever acts defensively either through compliance, evasion, escape, blind rebellion, or negativism.⁵⁹ This writer interestingly illustrates the use of several of these defenses:

(These are) boys who take no interest or pride in their school work. He will grumble and even refuse to do required work, especially written assignments. Oh, he won't make much fuss about going to school and he seems reasonably happy with his classmates. Yet he resents instruction, criticism, and being told what to do. He doesn't worry about poor reports--except for moments when the card comes home. Usually he wears a delightful air of nonchalance, while his parents and teacher bribe, scold, and exhort him to make a bigger effort.⁶⁰

In later stages, these defenses become very pronounced, as this writer indicates:

A few students in this group have reacted by retreat and withdrawal. They find safety in hiding. They find it difficult to speak in class. They avoid competition by refusing to try. It is more bearable to such a student to fail in an exam because he did not study, than to study and get a poor grade; more bearable to have no friends, than to try to find a friend and risk a rebuff. . . . In a sense, these students are committed to failure; they await with the passivity of the defeated.

The other, and larger, part of this group reacted with rebellion and resistance. They are committed to the opposition. Their rebellion is as overdetermined as the failure of the first group. They are compelled to resist, to see all

⁵⁸James D. McKenzie, Jr., "The Dynamics of Deviant Achievement," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLII (March, 1964), p. 685.

⁵⁹Taylor, op. cit., p. 79.

⁶⁰Kessler, op. cit., p. 13.

authority, even their own . . . as dangerous, inimical, destructive. They find it difficult to suppose that an adult might be friendly . . .⁶¹

Interpersonal Relations

In the area of interpersonal relations, it has been shown that gifted achievers tend to have positive relations with others, while gifted underachievers tend to have negative interpersonal relations. The gifted underachiever has conflict over his conduct and heterosexual adjustment.⁶² He is overly critical of others and exhibits asocial behavior,⁶³ tending to be withdrawn, seemingly self-sufficient, disinterested in others, and apathetic in many of his relations with his peers and adults. The girls are not chosen for positions of responsibility in co-curricular activities. Boys prefer companions who are older than themselves.

The gifted underachiever obtains lower ratings on cooperation, dependability, and judgment by his teachers. He tends to feel rejected and isolated from others,⁶⁴ and is more negative in his evaluation of others.⁶⁵ He underestimates the degree to which others accept him as

⁶¹Gladys H. Watson, "Emotional Problems of Gifted Students," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXIX (October, 1960), pp. 103-104.

⁶²Taylor, op. cit.

⁶³Shaw and Brown, op. cit.

⁶⁴Taylor, op. cit.

⁶⁵Shaw, op. cit., p. 23.

well as how well they accept themselves.⁶⁶

One investigator carried research on interpersonal relations a step farther. He writes:

Perhaps the answer (to underachievement) is in the psychological conditions and interpersonal relationships in the family. Support for this assumption is based on the experiences of the investigator as guidance counselor in interviewing working mothers of low achievers. As a group, they appeared to be more aggressive and hostile, and less involved with their sons, than working mothers of high achievers. They seemed to reject their role as homemaker and in general were dissatisfied with their position in the family.⁶⁷

Independence-Dependence Conflict

In the area of independence-dependence conflict, evidence shows the gifted underachievers to have a high conflict, while gifted achievers have a low conflict. Future goals, occupations, and subjects in school are influenced by parental pressures and aspirations. The gifted underachiever lacks a decisiveness to act and future occupations may be chosen because of the influence of others besides his parents.⁶⁸

He has prominent dependency needs. One investigator using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory in a study of underachievers found that the responses to a

⁶⁶Shaw and Alves, op. cit.

⁶⁷Edward Frankel, "Characteristics of Working and Non-Working Mothers Among Intellectually Gifted High and Low Achievers," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLII (April, 1964), p. 780.

⁶⁸Taylor, op. cit., p. 80.

certain cluster of items indicate that they are dependent for direction upon other people, who may be perceived as having little respect for their rights. "This tendency to subserve their own wishes to those of other people may be important in generating hostility in the underachievement group."⁶⁹

Activity Patterns

In the area of activity patterns, it has been found that gifted achievers tend to be academically oriented, while gifted underachievers tend to be socially oriented. The gifted underachiever exhibits a negative attitude toward school.⁷⁰ Lacking motivation and interest in the academic area, he obtains self-satisfaction in others areas and is considered to be more socially skillful than the gifted achiever.

The gifted underachiever is unwilling to conform to academic requirements and has strong interests in activities as opposed to interests of an intellectual nature. The tendency to go to college for social reasons, such as joining a fraternity or a sorority is evident. Having strong affiliation needs, he immaturely reaches out for contact experiences.⁷¹

⁶⁹McKenzie, op. cit.

⁷⁰H. H. Hughes and H. D. Converse, "Characteristics of the Gifted: A Case for a Sequel to Terman's Study," Exceptional Children, XXIX (December, 1962), p. 179.

⁷¹Taylor, op. cit., p. 81.

McKenzie, after giving the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory to underachievers made this observation and explanation:

While they express interest in social situations, some of their self-statements indicate difficulties in the area of interpersonal relationships. . . . They appear to incline toward dangerous, exciting activities and away from intellectual pursuits. It appears that, rather than having a set of values that guides them and enables them to delay impulse gratification, their tendency is to respond childishly to the impulse of the moment and then move on to something else. It might be reasoned that the resentment engendered by having been compelled to bow to the wishes of their parents had made them unwilling to accept the only set of values available to them, that of their parents. As have been implied, there are signs which seem to point to "superego conflict". They are resentful to standards imposed by others and wish to act out their resentment and repudiate those standards but, at the same time, they are dependent on others for guidance.⁷²

Goal Orientation

In the area of goal orientation, it is generally agreed that the goals of the gifted achiever tend to be more realistic, while those of the gifted underachiever tend to be more unrealistic. The gifted underachiever is highly emotional, restless, changable, and unhappy.⁷³ He lacks the persistence necessary for the achievement of long-range goals and tends to expend his energy in spurts, throwing himself into some activity and then losing interest.⁷⁴

⁷²McKenzie, op. cit., pp. 685-686.

⁷³Taylor, op. cit.

⁷⁴McKenzie, op. cit., p. 685.

He also lacks motivation to complete tasks that are assigned either in school or at home. Several of the investigations show the gifted underachiever's inability to decide upon educational and vocational goals, and the difference between his measured interests and his stated future vocational goals are wide. Many have no stated goals or else have goals which are impossible to achieve.⁷⁵

Relationship of Traits to Faulty Ego Development

Upon examining those personality traits which tend to accompany underachievement of the gifted, Gowan has stated that it would seem that it is the opposite of a description of healthy personal attitudes and behaviors which are associated with the accomplishment of growth patterns on schedule. "These skills and attitudes are connected with cognitive ego developmental stages of childhood. As each new adaption is resolved successfully, a new strength and vitality is incorporated into the ego."⁷⁶

Gowan speculates on why the development of a healthy ego did not take place:

The gifted underachiever appears to be a kind of intellectual delinquent who withdraws from goals, activities, and active social participation generally. As a child his initial attempts at creative accomplishment may not have been seen by others as "worthwhile", but only as "queer" or "different". The blocking of this avenue of rewarding behavior by others, tending as it does to reinforce his often over-critical

⁷⁵Taylor, op. cit.

⁷⁶Gowan, op. cit., p. 100.

appraisal of the disparity between his goals and achievements, may blunt his work libido, stifle his creativity, and consign him to a routine of withdrawal and escape as the most tolerable method of insulating his ego from hurt in an alien and disinterested world.

Thus achievement and underachievement in the gifted may be viewed as social and asocial responses of the individual to proper stimulation regarding developmental tasks either tendered or denied by the parental and educational environment.⁷⁷

The personality traits previously discussed seem to be connected, then, with a faulty development of the ego, giving the child a negative self-concept. Borislow has written: "Theoretically, self-evaluation is defined in terms of the discrepancy between self-perception and a concept of the ideal. . . .It appears that the larger the discrepancy the greater will be the degree of personality maladjustment."⁷⁸ It seems reasonable then, to expect that if the self-concept of an individual can be "built-up", this would, in turn, help to partially alleviate the other negative personality traits.

It has been found that the pattern of underachievement for many students can be traced back as early as the first grade for male underachievers and as far back as the sixth grade for the girls.⁷⁹ If

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 101.

⁷⁸B. Borislow, "Self-evaluation and Academic Achievement," Journal of Counseling Psychology, IX (Winter, 1962), p. 246.

⁷⁹Merville C. Shaw and J. F. McCuen, "The Onset of Academic Underachievement in Bright Children," Journal of Educational Psychology, LI (June, 1960), p. 108.

underachievement patterns can be detected this early in school life, then school personnel should be able to combat underachievement through organized guidance activities.

III
GUIDANCE IN THE MIDDLE AND UPPER GRADES
Implications for Guidance

"Any honest attempt to reduce underachievement must be based on an acceptance of the broad implications of individual differences."⁸⁰ The first step is the identification of the gifted as early as possible--in kindergarten or before. Meeks has said that if a child is gifted at 12 years of age, it is likely that he had the same gifts in kindergarten. A great deal of pertinent information can be obtained at this early age, especially through observation. As the child grows older, he acquires behavior that tends to "cover-up" his ability, making identification more difficult.⁸¹

Once a child has been identified as gifted, it is important to see that he is challenged throughout his school life with a stimulating learning program based on his individual needs.

Many children with superior ability enter school already conditioned to failure. Examples of these are

⁸⁰Anna R. Meeks, "What Can Be Done at the Elementary Level," Guidance for the Underachiever with Superior Ability, op. cit., p. 32.

⁸¹Ibid.

the children from minority groups, culturally deprived homes,⁸² and homes in which the parents are too busy to read or play with children; "who somehow do not infuse them with pride in success, with confidence, with personal security, with educational aspirations, and with a feeling of parental support and interest."⁸³

Anna Meeks makes this statement:

In spite of a challenging educational program, personality factors may make it impossible for some children to utilize their potential in a creative manner. The identification of those factors which prevent the use of ability is of primary importance. This suggests a need to determine how the child sees himself in relation to his school performance and to discover the relationship between this self-concept and actual performance. If we can discover children with disabling personality factors, we may perhaps determine the ways in which the classroom situation can be used to help the child whose attitudes toward school hinder, rather than enhance achievement.⁸⁴

Usually the first thing a teacher does when confronted with an underachieving student is to recommend some form of special instruction such as tutoring or remedial reading. These steps are often effective in some degree, but they do not usually reverse the pattern of thinking and behavior which have been part of the student's "life-style" for many years."⁸⁵

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Edna L. Harrison, "Elementary School Counselor and the Gifted Underachiever," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLI (April, 1963), p. 718.

⁸⁴Meeks, op. cit.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 39.

Guidance as Counseling

What is needed, in addition to remedial work, is improvement of the attitudes and behavior patterns of the student. If these negative aspects are partially brought about by a negative concept of the self, perhaps bringing about a change in the self-concept will, in turn, bring about a change in the negative aspects of the personality.

Research indicates that through counseling, much can be done for the gifted underachiever by raising his self concept. Success has been obtained through both individual and group procedures.

Individual Counseling: Individual counseling seems to be better for the personal problems of the gifted underachiever.⁸⁶ One school counselor, working with delayed readers in the junior high school, all of which were also enrolled in a remedial reading program, used a modified non-directive approach, his function being like that of a mirror, to show the student his real self and through perception to help him accept himself. In an atmosphere of warmth, permissiveness, and understanding, the counselor helped the individual to express and examine his feelings and tensions. The student was able to see his inner strengths and weaknesses in a new perspective and thus was better able to accept himself. As counseling

⁸⁶F. B. Baymer and C. H. Patterson, "A Comparison of Three Methods of Assisting High School Students," Journal of Counseling Psychology, VII (Summer, 1960), p. 83.

progressed, he was able to understand his behavior and make suitable adjustments. Although they were not dramatic, positive changes in self concept did occur in all counseled students. This in turn, helped the students to progress in reading achievement. The gain was significantly greater with the counseled group compared with that of the control group which received remedial instruction only.⁸⁷

Many times, just letting the gifted underachiever know that someone is interested in him personally does much to build his self concept. This finding was re-enforced during the search for academic talent in the culturally deprived areas of New York City:

Perhaps most significant was the awakening of student interest by the mere fact of identification and the recognition of potentiality by another. Many gifted students were unaware of their superior abilities and were not planning further education. Changed attitudes about their education and careers resulted. Although there were individual instances of decided improvement in school grades, most of the change in the serviced underachievers seems to have been in attitude. Change in attitude is difficult to measure, but an examination of the evaluation submitted by the students at the end of the service sessions suggests that the close contact with an interested adult, and in an informal atmosphere, was helpful to many students. In several cases, an entirely new world of possibilities for developing satisfying adult-youth relationships was discovered.⁸⁸

⁸⁷G. Keith Dolan, "Effects of Individual Counseling of Selected Test Scores for Delayed Readers," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLII (May, 1964), p. 918.

⁸⁸Morris Krugman and Irene H. Impellizzeri, "Identification and Guidance of Underachieving Gifted Students in New York City," Exceptional Children, XXVI (February, 1960), p. 285.

In regard to more direct counseling approaches with gifted individuals, Gowan gives these suggestions for helping the gifted underachiever:

1. Give attention to building up the gifted underachiever in the area where he has a real chance of outstanding success, whether this is athletics, music, a hobby, or an academic course. The real and enduring interest of some strong adult model figure with whom the young person can easily relate should be secured.
2. Give attention to the anxieties which plague boys at this period. These stresses may include economic dependence on a hostile home figure, ignorance about sex, worry about the draft, concern with how a mediocre record can be brought up to college standards, anxiety over the rejecting attitudes of a fussy stick-to-the-rules type of teacher, and many others. If the manifold social roles which the adolescent male is called upon to play in our culture can be gradually and easily assumed, much anxiety and frustration can be prevented. Above all, the boy should sense that the counselor has time for him. He should be encouraged to go on with college plans.
3. Try to find membership roles for the gifted underachiever in clubs, activities, and student leadership. He should be engaged in responsibilities which will enlarge his social abilities as much as possible.
4. Because this type of young person feels insecure and is likely to lack a real peer group, attempt group therapy with a number of gifted underachievers if at all possible. This may at least lead to confidences and possibly friendships among these people, leading ultimately to improved social adjustments.⁸⁹

Experiments prove these suggestions are basic to

⁸⁹John C. Gowan, "The Underachieving Gifted Child-- A Problem for Everyone," Exceptional Children, XXI (April, 1955), p. 249, 270.

improvement. Studies show that those gifted underachievers who significantly improved in their academic work were able to identify with a teacher or counselor who was consistently supportive and interested, who viewed each student as an individual and accepted his need for special help. Along with this, they also received help in mastering those learning skills which they failed to acquire in earlier grades.⁹⁰

When working closely with a gifted underachiever, usually one recognizes that he has "lack of motivation", but this explains very little about underlying factors and about the substance of "lack of motivation". Motivation is not a simple factor, but is made up of a complex of many forces. The tendency of the average teacher or counselor is to seek a formula for improving motivation in general. However, each case is unique, exactly as in other types of personality involvement, and prescription for remedies must be determined individually. This is disappointing to some, but familiar to those who are oriented in personality dynamics. The question is not always one of relative emotional instability or personal maladjustment, but of learning in each case, what non-achievement means to the individual and how it is used in the organization of his self concept.⁹¹

⁹⁰Miriam L. Goldburg and A. Henry Passow, "A Study of Underachieving Gifted," Educational Leadership, XVI (November, 1958), p. 125.

⁹¹Krugman and Impellizzeri, op. cit.

Group counseling: Group counseling of gifted underachieving students has been shown to produce significant changes in their self concepts. In the middle grades of the elementary school, it has been found that small groups of gifted children often benefit from talking together in the counselor's office. Here they discuss their school experiences, help each other recognize strengths and weaknesses, and decide how they can improve themselves. In working with these small groups, the counselor usually supplements this unstructured conversation with effective guidance techniques such as sociodrama and role-playing. A common theme is toleration of children who are slower than themselves. With these techniques, the children feel free to act out hostility or express a suppressed reaction without fear of unacceptance by the group, since they are only "play-acting".⁹² Such procedures work well in the regular classroom also.

Group counseling is particularly appropriate for gifted junior high students. So often they feel that they are the culprits and whatever the difficulty is, they are the ones who are forced to change their behavior. Most of them believe that few adults will listen to them and try to understand them. Many of them question whether adults can understand them. On the other hand, they believe that their peers can and do want to understand

⁹²Anna R. Meeks, "Guidance in the Elementary School," N. E. A. Journal, LI (March, 1962), p. 32.

them. Because they often use their peers as models, and want to be accepted by them, adolescents appreciate the opportunity to exchange ideas with each other in a permissive and accepting group. Inasmuch as they are struggling for independence from adults, they also prefer the assistance of peers in solving their problems.⁹³

In experiments of group counseling, it has been found that clients usually discover these things:

1. Expressing his own real feelings about people, things, and ideas help him to understand himself and the forces that disturb him.
2. At least one adult can accept him and wants to understand him.
3. His peers have problems, too.
4. In spite of his faults which his peers want to help him correct, they can accept him.
5. He is capable of understanding, accepting, and helping others.
6. He can learn to trust others.⁹⁴

In an experiment with underachievers in which eight students were involved in group counseling, the students explored their attitudes toward school work and future goals. They soon realized the great difference between their expressed goals and their marks and behavior in

⁹³John Broedel et al., "The Effects of Group Counseling on Gifted Underachieving Adolescents," Journal of Counseling Psychology, VII (Fall, 1960), p. 163.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 169.

S. Theodore Woal, "A Project in Group Counseling in a Junior High School," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLII (February, 1964), pp. 611-613.

school. In this atmosphere of freedom, one boy decided to tell his parents a secret he had kept from them for fear of punishment, thus eliminating anxiety that had kept him from concentrating. Another boy quit two outside jobs he had been holding as he realized the greater importance of his long-range goal.

As a result of the counseling sessions, four students improved their grades significantly, two more showed minor improvements, and two showed no improvement or behavior change. One of these was an emotionally unstable girl.⁹⁵

According to Brodel, when a student discovered that others accepted him, he found he could better accept himself. After this process he began to accept the fact that he was gifted and to make plans which required him to use his great potentialities.⁹⁶

He goes on to say:

All this takes time, yet these changes must precede any substantial improvement in grades. What is more, each client must learn to live with his new self, to communicate this new self to important others, and to teach these important others to understand, accept, and live with his new self. For example, it is difficult for the average teacher to believe that these hostile and uncooperative students have really changed and for the distressed parents to believe that these

⁹⁵P. Harris and F. Trotter, "Experiment with Under-achievers," Education, LXXXII (February, 1962), pp. 347-349.

⁹⁶Brodel et al., op. cit., p. 170.

youngsters are willing to take responsibility for their work, and without nagging.⁹⁷

Since this method of changing the self concept does take much time, an experiment was conducted of a one-session grouping counseling for purposes of motivating gifted students. Here the students were told of their high abilities with the idea that this would, in turn, motivate them to better achievement. It was found, however, that the opposite effect took place--the students actually did significantly poorer academic work. It was concluded that students are better left alone than just to be told that they can and should do better.⁹⁸

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Baymer and Patterson, op. cit.

IV CONCLUSIONS

In regard to the study made, it is concluded that there are measurable differences in personality traits between gifted underachievers and gifted achievers in those areas which affect academic success. These areas have been identified as academic anxiety, self-value, authority relations, interpersonal relations, independence-dependence conflict, activity patterns, and goal orientation.

It has been concluded that the underachiever tends to have a "free-floating" anxiety which keeps him from concentrating. He is more negative in his attitudes toward himself and others. He has feelings of unworthiness and inadequacy. He has a great amount of hostility directed toward authority figures, as well as poor relationships with his peer group. He is very dependent and many of his decisions are made by others. He tends to have unrealistic goals or none at all.

In comparison with the underachiever, it is concluded that the gifted achiever tends to have quite different personality traits. While those of the underachiever tend to be of a negative nature, those of the achiever tend to be of a positive nature.

Although the gifted achiever has anxiety also, it is directed towards his school work, giving him added energy. He accepts himself as being a worth-while person. He has positive attitudes towards authority and gets along very well with his peer group, often having a leadership position. He tends to have a low independence-dependence conflict, and he has realistic long-range goals.

It is concluded that this difference in personality traits can be partially attributed to the healthy or faulty development of the ego, and thus, the self-concept. As Gowan has shown, in the case of an achiever, the ego develops normally and on-schedule, growing stronger as each developmental stage is successfully resolved. The under-achiever, however, has avenues of rewarding behavior blocked, so that the ego does not develop on-schedule and does not become strengthened. This leads to an over-critical appraisal of the differences between his goals and his achievements, and he sees himself as unworthy and withdraws.

And, finally, it is concluded that the self-concept can be improved by individual and group counseling procedures. Guidance counselors, through counseling gifted underachievers, have had measured success in helping students to raise their self-concept, thus changing their attitudes toward school, and achieving at a higher level. This was indicated in the study by Dolan, in which the counseled group made significant gains in reading achievement in comparison to the uncounseled. Krugman and Impellizzeri found much improved

attitudes in their students after counseling sessions.

Broedel, and Harris and Trotter also found similar results in their experiment.

V

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the vast waste of the talents of the gifted, in order to alleviate underachievement, the gifted must be identified early. Parents need to be made aware of their tremendous responsibility in providing a firm, supportive emotional base, from which the child can reach out into other parts of society. They need to realize the importance of such things as providing rich and varied childhood experiences, providing answers to all the "whys" that they are able, encouraging creativity, and allowing the exploration of the environment.

When the child enters school, teachers should be alert to the characteristics of superior intelligence and should do more than pay lip service to "Take a child where he is and proceed from there." Once a child has been identified as gifted, challenging learning situations are a must if the child is not to develop a strong dislike, and ultimately a rejection, of school.

The teacher must realize that the gifted learn more quickly and thoroughly than an ordinary student and that he doesn't need repetitious materials and should not

be held back or made to do more of the same kind of thing. Ungraded primaries are strongly recommended.

Different assignments based on ability should be made. In a given skill in arithmetic, for example, a gifted child may need to work a maximum of five problems or less to completely master the process. If so, he should not be assigned more than necessary. He can use his time then in following up some interest, project, etc.

Enrichment activities must start early following some line of interest of the child. He should as early as possible be taught how to use reference material so that he can satisfy some of his curiosity on his own. The teacher should answer the questions which the child asks to the best of her ability and knowledge, although she should never hesitate to say, "I don't know. Let's find out," as a wrong answer cannot be tolerated for it destroys confidence.

The child and the teacher should plan projects for the child to carry out, according to his interest, talents, and experience. These should be shared with the class, which will appreciate his efforts and he, in turn, must be helped to appreciate theirs. While he must feel he is an important member of the group, care must be taken that he not become conceited over his ability.

The gifted child must be given opportunities to develop his superior reasoning powers. He should be given much practice in the interrelation of ideas, evaluating

materials critically, and understanding situations, other times and other peoples.

Adequate records should be kept along with having follow-up activities to see that, from year to year, teachers are aware of those students who have been identified as gifted. Periodical checks to see that his achievement is in keeping with his ability level are important. It is not enough that he do above average work. The teacher should expect and hold the gifted child to his best work.

With larger classes, however, it becomes increasingly hard to provide enriching and challenging learning situations for those who deviate from the normal in intelligence. It is recommended therefore, if at all possible, that special classes be provided for the gifted child. In doing so, as well as challenging him more fully, he will be able to associate more with those like himself, and so will feel less different. Children, especially adolescents, dislike being different from peers in any manner. Thus, they are more apt to achieve at their best level when the achievements of the peer group is likewise high.

It is felt that special classes are to be desired more than special schools, as some contact with other children is still maintained.

If it is impossible to provide for special classes, and in the case of a very superior child, if his physical, emotional, and social maturity warrant it, the child should be allowed to advance by means of acceleration, providing

he has mastered the skills at his present level. This will provide extra stimulation and allow him to be in a group that more nearly fits his needs. This, of course, would involve many things and should be done only when it is certain that it is best for the child.

If schools are unorganized to detect gifted children, many may slip by unnoticed. Thus, it is important that teachers consider the reasons behind negative personality traits which are displayed, such as, hostility, over-aggressiveness, withdrawal, poor peer relations, etc. When persons having these traits are detected, whether gifted or not, it is important to try to alleviate the cause. It is my feeling that any activity that builds up the self-concept of the individual will do much to foster correction of negative personality traits and bolster achievement desires.

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